

Testimony before the
Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation
and Public Lands on
Government Island

February 7, 2002

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the Committee, I thank you for taking up House Resolution 261 commemorating the contributions of Government Island.

As Virginia's Member of the First Congressional District to the United States House of Representatives I am very proud of the many historically significant contributions the great Commonwealth has offered our Nation. Virginia has given America eight of its distinguished men to the office of the Presidency and countless other elected officials, military heroes, and active citizens to the cause of freedom and democracy.

As our forefathers struggled to create a Nation through a Declaration of Independence and an enduring Revolution, they sought to create symbols to express the permanence of their new found freedom. Led by Virginia native George Washington, the Founding Fathers began to plan a city that would dignify the grandeur of the new United States of America. They chose the land situated geographically centered in the new nation, up the Potomac River and to the top of what was known as Jenkin's Hill, a place Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the city's planner, called "a pedestal waiting for a monument."

I could not agree more. Our Capitol has survived over two hundred years through the War of 1812 and the Civil War. More recently, the building was a suspected target of the recent horrific terrorist attacks on our country. This building has expanded and matured into the great symbol of America. The freedoms we hold so dear, and recent events, have only solidified my deep fondness for our Capitol and what it represents.

Although little known, the first section of the North wing of the Capitol and the White House were constructed of Aquia Sandstone from Government Island in the Aquia Creek in Stafford County, Virginia: another proud Virginia contribution.

I have introduced, as you know, House Resolution 261 in remembrance of this "jewel of the First" and to mark the accomplishments of the Stafford Board of Supervisors, and Stafford's citizens, for their good work in preserving this national treasure.

H. Res. 261 commemorates Government Island and its contributions to the early construction of our Nation's Capitol and the new Capital City, and seems well placed in this time of overwhelming patriotism and national pride. It seems only fitting to recognize the contributions of the Aquia quarries to our Nation. After all, the placing of our Capitol Building's cornerstone was in many respects symbolic of our Nation's beginning over 200 years ago.

I would like to thank the entire Virginia Delegation for joining me as co-sponsors of this resolution. Additionally, I would like to thank two individuals who join me today to testify on behalf of this resolution; they, along with Stafford's Commission on Government Island, have worked timelessly for this

worthy cause.

First, Rex Scouten, who spent nearly fifty years at the White House, serving Presidents from Truman to Clinton. Rex began his career at the White House as a Secret Service Agent and after ten years of service became the Assistant Usher. Rex was later promoted to Chief Usher and then finally named as White House Curator. A very distinguished career he should be commended on, but thankfully for Government Island it did not stop there. Rex was tapped to serve on Stafford's Committee on on Government Island and I am grateful for his dedication to our local, and national, treasures.

And secondly, Jane Conner, a long time Stafford teacher and resident. Jane has published several articles, and the definitive history of Government Island. She is also a former President of the Stafford County Historical Society and member of the Stafford Historical Committee.

Mr. Donald Kennon, Historian of the U.S. Historical Society, called this "an excellent resolution." And continued "I support it fully." It is my hope that you might see this resolution in the same light. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee I encourage your support of this important resolution and thank you bringing up this matter today.

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